

Marbled cat (*Pardofelis marmorata*)



French:	Chat Marbré
Spanish:	Gato Jaspeado
Kingdom	Animalia
Phylum	Chordata
Class	Mammalia
Order	Carnivora
Family	Felidae
Genus	<i>Pardofelis</i> (1)
Size	Head-and-body length: 45 – 62 cm (2) Tail length: 356 – 550 mm (2)
Weight	2.4 – 3.7 kg (2)

STATUS

The marbled cat is classified as Vulnerable (VU) on the IUCN Red List (1), and listed on Appendix I of CITES (3).

DESCRIPTION

The marbled cat (*Pardofelis marmorata*) possesses an unusual mixture of small and big cat characteristics (2). Although just three kilograms and about the size of a domestic cat, this species superficially resembles the much larger clouded leopard in its broad feet, enlarged canines and strikingly similar, blotched coat pattern (2) (4) (5). The thick, soft, brownish-yellow fur is covered on the back and sides in large, mottled, irregular-shaped blotches margined with black (4) (5). However, these markings are less well-defined in the marbled cat than those of its larger cousin, tending to be more broken and marbled (hence the name), while the black spots on the limbs are more numerous (4) (6). The bushy tail is extremely long, reflecting the cat's **arboreal** lifestyle, and similarly marked with black spots and rings (5) (7). Prominent black lines occur on the head, neck and back, starting as dark, interrupted bands running from the corner of each eye up and over the forehead (2) (4). Distinctive dark stripes also mark the cheeks, while the chin, upper lip, cheeks and patches around the eyes are contrastingly white or buff in colour (4) (8). The eyes are amber or golden, and the ears are short, rounded and black, with a conspicuous white to buff spot on the back (4).

RANGE

Found from northern India and Nepal, through south-eastern Asia to Borneo and Sumatra (9). Most records of the marbled cat are from single observations and its distribution may therefore be wider than currently known (4).

HABITAT

Although primarily thought to be an inhabitant of moist tropical forest, the marbled cat's specific habitat requirements are poorly known, with only anecdotal information available (1). In fact, this species has been recorded in a wide range of habitats from sea level up to 3,000 metres (2), including mixed deciduous-evergreen forest, secondary forest, clearings, six-year-old logged forest, **Dipterocarp forest** and a **rocky river-cliff overgrown with scrub and low bush** (1).

BIOLOGY

Very little is known about the biology, behaviour and diet of the marbled cat, except what has been observed in captivity (6). The species is believed to be primarily **nocturnal** and more **arboreal** than most other cats, which would help explain its relative obscurity (2) (4), although recent studies have shown activity during both day and night (7). With its long, slender body, extremely long tail, short legs and broad feet, the marbled cat is well-adapted for tree-climbing and has been observed in trees in the wild, once stalking a bird, and is an adept climber in captivity (2) (6). Birds are thought to constitute a major part of the diet, and there have also been records of squirrels and rats being eaten, while lizards and frogs may also be taken (2) (6). Little is known about how far this secretive cat ranges, although one female, radio tracked in Thailand for a month, was found to have a home range of 5.3 square kilometres (10).

What is known of this cat's reproductive behaviour comes from observations of just a few captive individuals. Two litters of two kittens have been recorded from January and February, and one litter of unknown size was born in September. **Gestation** is estimated to last somewhere between 66 and 82 days (2). Young attain sexual maturity at 21 to 22 months and individuals in captivity have lived up to 12 years and three months (2) (6).

THREATS

The marbled cat is thought to be rare throughout its range, although infrequent encounters may be attributable, at least in part, to its reclusive nature and remote forest habitat. Thus, little information exists on the species' true status (2). The major threat to this cat is believed to be the widespread destruction of its forest habitat throughout Southeast Asia, which is occurring at an alarming rate and not only affects this species, but also its prey base (1) (9). Thankfully, for an animal with such a beautiful coat, the marbled cat is seldom found in the illegal wildlife trade in Asia (1) (9).

CONSERVATION

Hunting of this species is prohibited in Bangladesh, Cambodia, China (Yunnan only), India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal and Thailand. Hunting regulations are in place in Laos and Singapore, and the marbled cat has been placed on Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered species (CITES), prohibiting international trade in the species (1). Marbled cats are rarely seen in zoos and breed poorly in captivity (2). Further investigation into the status of the marbled cat in the wild, and the degree to which it can tolerate loss and disturbance of its forest habitat, is urgently needed (1).

FIND OUT MORE

For more information on the marbled cat and other cat species:

- IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group (CSG):
http://www.catsg.org/catsgportal/20_catsg-website/home/index_en.htm
- The Cat Survival Trust:
<http://www.catsurvivaltrust.org/marbled.htm>

For further information on the wild cat trade in Myanmar:

- Chris R. Shepherd and Vincent Nijman (2008): *The wild cat trade in Myanmar*. TRAFFIC Southeast Asia
<http://www.bigcatrescue.org/000news/pdf/2008/TRAFFICCatReport.pdf>

AUTHENTICATION

Authenticated (16/08/07) by Andrew Hearn, Bornean Wild Cats and Clouded Leopard Project/ Global Canopy Programme.

<http://www.globalcanopy.org/>

GLOSSARY

- **Arboreal:** living in trees.
- **Dipterocarp:** of the Dipterocarpaceae family, a group of resinous trees that are found in the old world tropics.
- **Gestation:** the state of being pregnant; the period from conception to birth.
- **Nocturnal:** active at night.

REFERENCES

1. IUCN Red List (December, 2006)
<http://www.iucnredlist.org>
2. Sunquist, M. and Sunquist, F. (2002) *Wild Cats of the World*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
3. CITES (December, 2006)
<http://www.cites.org>
4. Animal Diversity Web (December, 2006)
http://animaldiversity.ummz.umich.edu/site/accounts/information/Pardofelis_marmorata.html

5. Big Cats Online (December, 2006)
<http://www.agarman.dial.pipex.com/marbled.htm>
6. IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group (CSG) (December, 2006)
http://www.catsg.org/catsgportal/20_catsg-website/home/index_en.htm
7. Animal Info – Information on Endangered Mammals (December, 2006)
<http://www.animalinfo.org/species/carnivor/pardmarm.htm>
8. The Cat Survival Trust (December, 2006)
<http://www.catsurvivaltrust.org/marbled.htm>
9. Big Cat Rescue (December, 2006)
http://www.bigcatrescue.org/marbled_cat.htm
10. Grassman, L.I., Tewes, M.E., Silvy, N.J. and Kreetiyutanont, K. (2005) Ecology of three sympatric felids in a mixed evergreen forest in North-Central Thailand. *Journal of Mammalogy*, **86**(1): 29 - 38.